

AGENDA ITEM III B 2

PROPOSED ACADEMIC PROGRAM

LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY - ALEXANDRIA

B.A. IN ENGLISH

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Louisiana State University at Alexandria (LSU-A) is proposing the creation of a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) degree in English to be implemented Fall 2008. The proposed program, if approved, will replace the existing English major within the Bachelor of Liberal Studies (B.L.S.) degree currently offered by the University. The projected program was approved by the Louisiana State University Board of Supervisors in April 2008.

STAFF ANALYSIS

1. Program Description/Objectives

The proposal notes the following:

The Bachelor of Arts in English will offer students both a comprehensive education in the study of literature and a strong background in a range of other disciplines in the humanities, sciences, and social sciences. At the heart of the program is a thirty-nine hour curriculum in English, one that will allow students to study individual works of literature and to acquire an understanding of the traits or principles that those works share with the literature of other periods and other cultures. While the curriculum offers students substantial choice at the junior and senior levels, it also provides them with a clear structure or framework within which to develop their knowledge of the discipline; thus, although flexible, it does not sacrifice unity or coherence. The proposed program will, of course, require students to meet the requirements of the General Education curriculum shared by all of LSUA's degree programs. In addition, however, students enrolled in the English program will be required to take fourteen hours of foreign languages, an additional six hours of history, three hours of philosophy, and three hours of geography. These additional course requirements amplify and deepen the requirements of the university's General Education curriculum and will offer substantial support to the English major itself.

The proposed curriculum totals 126 credit hours, including 39 hours of general education, 39 hours of major requirements, 30 hours of additional requirements, and 18 hours of electives.

2. Program Need

With regard to need, when asked if the proposed program has been offered at the University previously, the University responded:

The proposed degree is similar to LSUA's Bachelor of Liberal Studies (English Major), added at the start of the spring 2005 semester. In fact, the major requirements of the new degree are essentially the same as those of the existing degree; all the major courses, except one, exist and are in regular rotation in the academic schedule. The proposed degree, however, differs from the existing degree in two important respects. First, its title – Bachelor of Arts in English – has a much more familiar ring to it and indicates much more than the title of the existing degree does that it is a standard baccalaureate offering, similar in its composition to those offered at both public and private four-year institutions in both Louisiana and across the country. The title of the existing degree, by contrast, is less common and routinely requires explanation and clarification.

Second, the proposed degree requires English majors to take several non-English courses that are not required by the existing degree. These additional course requirements amplify and deepen the General Education curriculum required of all students pursuing degree programs at LSUA and offer substantial support to the English major itself. Students who pursue the new degree will be required, for example, to take both history sequences – Western Civilization I and II and American History I and II; in a world in which the inadequacy of short-term thinking is increasingly evident, the ability to think intelligently about the past and to develop reasoned expectations about the future seems altogether desirable. The required course in geography will also encourage students to broaden their intellectual horizons and to become familiar with places and peoples other than their own. In addition, English majors will take the freshman and sophomore course sequences in either French or Spanish. The acquisition of a foreign language offers graduates an obvious advantage in a marketplace in which national boundaries are increasingly irrelevant. Beyond that, however, the kind of intellectual discipline and intense study that learning another language requires will strengthen students' minds and develop their ability to think systematically. The required course in philosophy offers students another opportunity to deepen their appreciation of reason and logic while the required science laboratory will allow them to grasp the importance of reason and logic in the practical realm.

The English faculty consider that both the changed title and the additional requirements of the proposed degree substantially increase its value to our graduates and their prospective employers.

The proposal compares the curriculum of the proposed program to English degrees that are offered in-state at LSU A&M, LSU-Shreveport, UL-Lafayette, UL-Monroe, Southeastern Louisiana University, McNeese State University, Nicholls State University, Northwestern State University, and Southern University and A&M. Staff notes that undergraduate English degrees

are also offered by Grambling State University, Louisiana Tech University, the University of New Orleans, and Southern University at New Orleans.

When asked why an additional program in this area is needed (given that similar programs already exist at Louisiana public institutions), the University responded:

For two reasons:

First, the Bachelor of Arts in English is not the kind of “niche” program that caters to only a small student population and that cannot, therefore, be duplicated across the state. The proposed degree is, in fact, is a standard baccalaureate offering at most four-year colleges and universities in both Louisiana and across the country.

Second, the addition of core Bachelor degree programs at LSUA will result in substantial benefits to the communities that it serves. The area of Central Louisiana from which LSUA is likely to draw students (Economic Development Region 6 plus Allen and Evangeline Parishes) has an adult population (individuals age 25 or older) with a very low level of educational attainment. Only 12.45% of that population have obtained a bachelor’s degree or higher; with the data from Rapides Parish removed (there the percentage is 16.5), the percentage is only 10.3. Less than 10% of the adult population have obtained a bachelor’s degree or higher in seven of the ten central Louisiana parishes. This percentage is significantly below the state average of 18.7% and the national average of 24.4% (all figures from 2000 Census data). As many community leaders in the Central Louisiana region have observed, the dearth of college graduates is a major impediment to economic development in the region. The England Industrial Park Authority, the local Chamber of Commerce, as well as other businesses, industries, and governmental entities, have all noted that an adequately educated workforce requires the presence of a four-year, baccalaureate-granting institution in the region; and that the presence of such an institution significantly increases the region’s ability to draw prospective employees and their families from other parts of Louisiana and from other states.

In short, if approved, the proposed Bachelor of Arts in English would be a substantial and important addition to LSUA’s current set of core degree programs. It would provide employers in the region with graduates well-equipped with indispensable skills--in reading, writing, and critical thinking--and with the kind of imagination and agility of mind to adapt to new circumstances and to acquire new knowledge and skills even after the completion of their formal education.

3. Students

In its documentation, the University contends that most of the students currently enrolled in the existing program, the Bachelor of Liberal Studies (English major), will enroll in the new degree program should it be approved. Enrollment projections submitted by the University are as follows:

Year	Projected Enrollment	Projected Number of Graduates
2008-2009	79	8
2009-2010	96	15
2010-2011	107	14
2011-2012	116	17
2012-2013	127	22

4. Faculty

The University indicated that 13 existing faculty members will be most directly involved in the proposed program. Staff assessment of their vitae reveal that these faculty are well-qualified. No new faculty are needed to offer the program.

5. Library Resources

The institution contends in its proposal that current library holdings in English are adequate to initiate the proposed program. It states, however, that additional books and electronic resources will be purchased as needed. As such, a minimum of \$25,000 (averaging \$5,000 per fiscal year) will be needed for library expenditures during the first five years of the proposed program. The University notes that monies for library collections are budgeted through the library and not in the departments. As such, the \$25,000 budgeted for library expenditures is not reflected in the budget shown in Section 9 "Costs."

6. Facilities

The University purports that it has sufficient classroom space for the program in existing buildings on campus.

7. Administration

The Bachelor of Arts in English will be administered by the Department of Arts, English, and Humanities in the College of Arts and Sciences.

8. Accreditation

There are no specialized accrediting bodies for English degree programs.

9. Costs

Additional costs for the proposed program are as follows:

	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012
Supplies	\$2,000	\$2,048	\$2,097	\$2,147
Total	\$2,000	\$2,048	\$2,097	\$2,147

The proposal states that 100% of all costs will be covered through tuition and fees.

STAFF SUMMARY

The staff notes that English is considered a core academic offering of any four-year institution of higher education. As the University transitions to full four-year status and continues to build its academic offerings accordingly, the staff feels that the proposed program would indeed compliment the current offerings by the University. The University has presented a well-justified and well-conceived proposal to establish a separate and distinct B.A. program in English. Their request for Fall 2008 approval is reasonable and should be honored. Given that this is a new degree program, monitoring of student numbers and placement of graduates would be appropriate. As such, the staff recommends conditional approval with an annual progress report due August 1, 2009, and on that date annually thereafter, addressing the aforementioned issues. Lastly, Staff notes that with this approval the concomitant termination of the B.L.S. (English major) is appropriate.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The staff recommends that the Academic and Student Affairs Committee grant conditional approval for the proposed Bachelor of Arts in English degree program (CIP Code 23.0101) at Louisiana State University at Alexandria, effective Fall 2008, subject to the following stipulations:

- 1. Beginning August 1, 2009, and on that date annually thereafter, the University shall report numbers of program enrollees, completers, and placement of graduates to the Associate Commissioner for Academic Affairs.*
- 2. With implementation of this program, the English major in the existing Bachelor of Liberal Studies program (CIP Code 24.0101) is hereby terminated.*